



*As you turn the pages of this magazine, you will take a journey paved with wisdom, humor and astonishing thoughts. Some pieces will take you back in time and others will touch your heart with the emotions of the moment. Sit back and enjoy the trip!*

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November 17, 2008

Dear Writer,

At long last the 2008 Newton Senior Center Literary Magazine, "Bits and Pieces" is out! Enclosed please find your copy. More are available at the center. Just pop by and see me (Joanne). We do appreciate a donation of \$2 for each extra copy.

I hope you are as pleased as we are with this wonderful project!

Congratulations,  
Joanne Fisher, Program Coordinator

“Literature may be the poetic memory of humanity. It is the power of the story: we see the tale and we don’t even realize the tale has entered us and has had an impact on our decisions, on our dreams, on our ambitions, our hopes.”

*Ellie Weisel, 2006*

**“Begin at the beginning and go on till you come  
to the end: then stop.”**

*Lewis Carroll*

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland...Said by the King to the White Rabbit*



*By James Schaye Sr.*

A FEW SHORT WEEKS AND I'LL STILL BE  
 ALIVE AND KICKING, (HOPEFULLY),  
 PEOPLE SAY I'M DOING FINE,  
 CONSIDERING I'LL BE EIGHTY-NINE!!  
 I STILL PLAY GOLF, I DRIVE MY CAR,  
 NOT MUCH AT NIGHT, AND NOT TOO FAR.  
 I TRY TO EAT THREE MEALS A DAY,  
 THOUGH SANDWICHES ARE MY REAL MAINSTAY.  
 I'M ALWAYS TIRED, EXCEPT IN BED,  
 WHEN A MILLION THOUGHTS ENGULF MY HEAD.  
 EACH DAY I READ THE DAILY PRESS  
 AND VIEW THE WORLD'S UNHOLY MESS,  
 AND THEN I TURN TO THE LATEST OBIT  
 TO SEE IF I HAVE REACHED THAT STAGE.  
 SO MANY THINGS I USED TO DO,  
 I CAN'T HELP THINKING, "WHO NEEDS YOU?"  
 I HOPE THIS FEELING SOON MAY PASS,  
 AND I WILL HEAR "GET OFF YOUR ASS!"  
 MAYBE WHEN I REACH THE BIG NINE-O  
 GOD MAY SAY, "IT'S TIME TO GO".

THOUGH TO TELL THE TRUTH,  
 I'VE OFTEN WONDERED  
 WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO REACH A  
 HUNDRED!!!



**In the Seasons of Winter, Spring,  
 Summer and Fall**

*By Rita N. Wolfson*

Fresh fallen snow blanketing the night.  
 a portrait of winter in black and white.  
 Scents of spring fill the air,  
 bursts of yellow forsythias everywhere.  
 Long hot summer days, cool blue skies,  
 treasures from the ocean brought by the tides.  
 Burnt orange, red and gold autumn trees,  
 baring their branches, dancing in the breeze.  
 A wonderment of color that nature provides for all,  
 in the seasons of Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall.





## **BELLINKA: CROSSING TO THE NEW WORLD**

Copyright Dinah Kudatsky 1993

You, Bella, are sitting on the deck of La France  
holding a Uneeda biscuit in one hand, and in the other a cup of tea.

Bellinka, your Papa calls you.  
Seven years old, and leaving Europe forever.

Today on ship you will be eating your very first orange,  
imagine, an orange, and in wintertime!  
The ship tilts languorously from side to side.  
As the steam from your mug rises to dampen your face,  
you study the overturned bowl of blueness all around you.

From horizon to horizon, there is no end, there are no borders.  
Your mind tries to imagine numerical dimensions.  
Your mind tries to gather up the old toward the new,  
like a dart in your Mama's sewing, to make it all fit together.  
But you are too drunk with your seven year old pleasures.  
The fragrant tea, the sweet, mealy biscuit,  
the swirl of sea and sky, the figure-eight motion of the ship,  
the hot pink sweater which you begged your strict Mama  
to buy for you on that last shopping trip to Vienna,  
and which you now proudly pull around you.

And soon you will be eating your very first orange.  
What wondrous things there are in the world!  
In the old country, you were little Bella Goldenberg,  
Bellinka, of #4 Schlachthaus Gasse in Lundenbourg.  
Your Papa played the cello and drank beer in the Ringplatz.  
Your Mama made potato soup and hid you from the gypsies.  
You played in the fields where soldiers practiced their drills,  
where Austria practiced to become Czechoslovakia.

In the old country, you even thought you might grow up  
to become the Kaiser, or even better, a kutcher, horse and buggy driver,  
riding high through the center of your village.  
You were your parents' child then.  
But now everything is changed. Even the borders.



Your parents, Austrians from Hungary and Poland, who speak  
Yiddish and German, are leaving Czechoslovakia via France  
to become greenhorn Americans.

There are no lines drawn on the open sea.  
Five days without a border, your mind can't contain such hugeness.  
Inside your brain, a gypsy girl is madly dancing a tarantella,  
wearing a peasant blouse, gold hoop earrings, and a flaring skirt  
which rolls in waves like the ocean.

You heft the orange globe in your hands, and run your fingers  
over its circumference, tracing an imaginary journey  
You are not yet concerned with what will become of you in America,  
but rather that the smell of an orange is pungent  
and full of promise and delight.

Your Papa will carve the orange rind just so, spiraling  
the pretty peel like a long, curved road.  
You'll bounce the peel like a yo-yo. You and Joey,  
Mama and Papa, each of you will get a segment of orange.

The ship rolls and rises in the waves.  
From horizon to curving horizon, there is no end.  
There is only this indelible moment. It opens you. To yourself.  
The earth curves like an orange. Inside you, a gypsy girl is dancing.  
You are going to America.  
America, with its Negro music and chewing gum  
and underground cars, and cities the size of oceans.  
America, a dizzying tilt-a-wheel carnival ride of choices.  
America, where we go when we've left behind the ones we were supposed to be.  
America, where everyone sheds the old life and reinvents the self.

Who will you be in the New World?  
You'll worry about such things later.  
Now it's enough that there are no borders.  
Here in this moment, you extend your arms from the old world to the new,  
the way a child shows her mother, I love you this much.  
You feel you could almost contain the whole world.  
And now, like two arms, your whole life extends across  
the rolling sea of the whole 20th century.  
What wonders you've seen on this crossing!

The open sea opened you, but it was a secret, even to yourself.  
The path back to yourself is a long spiral.  
Every day now, you make a crossing to the New World.  
Secretly, your mind remains audaciously open.  
Secretly, you are an explorer. The old boundaries have fallen away.  
You invent words. You break rules.  
You get younger and smarter each year.  
You refuse to act like a stereotype.  
Your eyes are as luminous as the moon on the water.

Now old, you know again what you first knew at seven:  
your life is a fruit. Pungent!  
Full of promise! Delightful! Brand new!  
You slake your thirst on the world.  
Segment by segment, you chew on the world,  
thrilled in winter to find its juiciness.  
Especially in winter.

Bellinka, your heart is as simple as what you can hold in your hand.  
Your mind is oceanic, and without borders.  
Each day you make a crossing to a new world and imagine  
what you might still become.  
Each day, you open yourself, like a new fruit,  
full of wonder and delight.  
Still crossing borders, you are becoming the Kaiser, the kutchner,  
and all you want to be.

~~~~~

*Sad news from Dinah and Helen Kudatsky: our mom, Bella Goldenberg Kudatsky, passed away Sunday, May 4th, at her apartment in Newton Centre, MA. We were with her. She was 94 years and 11 months old. Mom's body was tired, but her spirit was undaunted. She was adored for her kind and welcoming heart. She was a published poet, collector of seashells from around the world, loved word games, was funny and wacky and original, and was always curious and open. She performed in her own play, "Birthday Wish", at the Newton Senior Center... And of course she was our beloved mother and a great listening friend. Her enthusiasm for life and learning was unbounded, and she never let age define her. And we are so proud of her for this: as a dedicated recycler, she has gifted her body to science. She is now "enrolled" in UMass Medical School.*

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## **IN BELLA'S HAND**

*Copyright Dinah Kudatsky 1994*

In Bella's hand:  
a needle and thread:  
Mamale, bring me something to fix,  
I need to feel useful,  
otherwise what's the point?  
That hem is a bit long, sweetheart,  
I could shorten it if you want.

In Bella's hand:  
a crossword puzzle:  
I'm banging my head on 12 down,  
a ten letter word for "ever- present",  
why won't it come, is it Alzheimer's already?  
Oh, oh, wait - ubiquitous! That's it!

In Bella's hand:  
her own head, in the dinette of the old house,  
grieving her Mama.  
"Meine beste Freundin!"  
With whom will I argue with now?

In Bella's hand:  
white Corelle and a fork, scrambling eggs.  
Once a week won't kill me,  
You have to live a little sometimes,  
besides which those Eggbeaters taste like crap,  
if you ask me.

In Bella's hand:  
a blouse, 30% off at the Bargain Basement:  
feels like silk, and it'll fit my Helen,  
but is it washable?

In Bella's hand:  
a handful of pastel coquinas from Sanibel Island.  
Look! Look how beautiful nature made the world!  
Did you ever see anything so beautiful?

In Bella's hand:  
a maroon lipstick,  
making sweeping arches over the lips at the mirror,  
like Hedy Lamarr in the '40 s,  
I was a looker back then, if I do say so myself,

with my flared peasant skirts, big hoop earrings,  
and a bare midriff in the Florida sun,  
you should have seen me!

In Bella's hand:  
a cup of decaf:  
it doesn't taste like the real thing,  
but what can you do?  
Life is full of losses, you have to adjust.

In Bella's hand:  
a paper Nautilus, delicate and translucent-white,  
the seashell-spun lace crib for its eggs  
to float protected on the sea.  
If I could only make a strong enough Nautilus  
to safely float my middle-aged daughters  
for when I am gone.

In Bella's hand:  
a piece of Cadbury dark chocolate,  
eyes closed and dreaming that  
there must be dark chocolate in heaven:  
"A soyne zol dost nisht essen" –  
an enemy shouldn't eat this - it's too good!

In Bella's hand:  
a capsule of Cardizem 60 mg.  
sustained release.  
I'm on borrowed time, kinderlech,  
so you shouldn't feel so bad when I'm gone,  
because  
I've finally made my life something in the last 10  
years,  
became my own person,  
my own self finally,  
and I know who I am,  
and I like myself.



## **Strolling the Beach in the Early Morn**

*By Rita N. Wolfson*

Oh, how I love strolling the beach in the early morn,  
my place to feel free, adventurous and to be reborn.  
Inhaling the presence of the sun, sky, sand and ocean,  
fills my entire being with their magical potion.  
Watching the waves break into foam as I stand at the shore,  
leaving my footprints indented on the ocean floor.  
Stopping to search carefully with each hand,  
for old buried treasures in the sand.  
Finding a pail and shovel that's been cast aside,  
but knowing a little person will fill it with pride.  
Oh, how I love strolling the beach in the early morn,  
to feel free and adventurous and to be reborn.



## **Dear Kate**

*By Joyce Weenberg*

When you laid your sweet head upon my chest,  
it made me wish I had been the one who had  
made the nest,  
that kept you safe  
when you were a little waif.  
I'd love to watch your years unfurl,  
you are quite a remarkable little girl.  
I'd love to take you to the park  
where you could hear the doggies bark.  
I'd love to take you to the beach  
where I could teach  
and you could reach,  
for all the wonders of everyday  
and we'd be thankful and pray.  
For how your blessed parents endeavor  
to keep you safe forever and ever.  
I'd bake you a cake  
much better than Drakes,  
and we'd play board games  
especially if it's cold and rains.  
If you win the game  
I'd love you just the same.  
We'd play and we'd snack  
and then we'd relax.  
And I'd recall stories of family plots,  
Then you can say "Granny, I love you a lot"

## **THE KEY**

*By Mary M. Caruso*

I stare at the door barely noticing you  
Meekly jutting out into space,  
Almost melting into the walls that surround you.

I hold you in my hands  
And study  
The delicate exquisite carvings  
That etch your being.  
You are old; uniquely made.

I think of what you have witnessed,  
You have mourned  
Indecision, loss, betrayal  
You have rejoiced in  
Success, good fortune and love.

You are an antique,  
A studied, sturdy example  
Of the weathering of time.

You are a witness  
That all of life is necessary.  
That beauty lies in our exquisitely  
Defined existence.

**In Need of Understanding ?**  
**Or... Overheard in the Backyard**

*By Madeleine Osborn*



***The Bee***

“Buzz, buzz, buzz” said the bee  
As he circled ‘round the apple tree,  
“That smells sweet, now, what can it be?  
Whoops! Someone sat on me!”

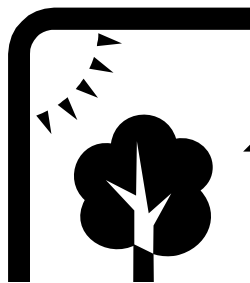
***The Worm***

Digging, always digging:  
‘Twill always be my fate!  
Unless I tunnel deep enough,  
I’ll end my life as bait.

***The Raccoon***

To overturn each leaf I see,  
Is working overmuch.  
‘Tis easier, you will agree  
with garbage pails and such.

They’re clearing off the table,  
To me, that’s quite all right;  
For what they throw away will be,  
A gourmet meal tonight!



***The Dog***

They scold me when I’m having fun,  
They pat me when I’m not,  
If left to me, whose cats would flee.  
I’d empty out the lot.

***The Cat***

Boy, oh boy! How I can fight!  
Hear my mating call at night?  
Satiated, I can sleep,  
Not for me, this “counting sheep”.

***The Squirrel***

One nut, two nuts, three nuts, four:  
I filled my house and closed the door.  
I scampered ‘round, then tucked away  
And while I worked, watched others play.  
Now, while snow and wind blow free,  
I’ll sit and chew, contentedly.

## **IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD THEY STILL MAKE WAY FOR DUCKLINGS**

*By Joan Chaisson*

When I was a little girl, my favorite after-dinner stroll on Sunday afternoon was to the duck-feeding area at Weston Bridge, close by Norumbega Park. Uncle Paul or Aunt Catherine would help us break up any stale crusts from the tin breadbox on the kitchen shelf, and repack the pieces in the wax paper bread wrapper, and off we would go.

Once I was old enough to play along the river, it was always fun to come across a mother duck and her train of downy ducklings. Many mother ducks chose to hide their babies in plain sight, on Duck Island, right there at the duck feeding area. This was a strip of reeds and mud, protruding from the shallow water about eight or ten feet from the shore. During the thirties, the WPA workers had connected the island to the shore by a couple of rustic wooden footbridges. We would cross these bridges to walk to the path around the area and get a firsthand view of the baby ducks there with their mallard parents. Other more cautious duck parents nested in the more remote backwaters and coves along the river, protecting their chicks from passers-by. However, this exposed them to muskrats and giant snapping turtles, some bigger than a pie plate, who lurked in the shallows, as smaller harmless turtles sunned themselves on the rocks and logs along the riverbanks.

When Robert McCloskey's delightful tale of Mr. and Mrs. Mallard and their troop of ducklings came out, I enjoyed reading it to our children and grandchildren. It stirred up fond memories of my own youthful encounters with similar duck families along the Charles. I especially enjoyed the illustrations of the duck family and their adventure crossing the Boston Public Garden and Arlington Street to get to the Charles River, under the watchful eye of a Boston Police Officer named Michael.

You will be happy to learn that, here and there around town, the descendants of this famous Mr. and Mrs. Mallard and their family is still making the hazardous trek to the Charles River each spring, under the watchful eyes of a considerate Newton Public servant. This is why I know...

One sunny morning as my husband and I were wending our way to the office, we turned the corner from Craft Street into California Street. We saw that a fire Captain had stopped his bright red car across the next intersection, parking it in such a way that it slowed traffic in all four directions. No other emergency vehicle was in sight in either direction. As we slowed, I looked up and down the intersection for signs of smoke or fire, or firefighters and hoses, or a police officer directing us to go one way or another. As we came to a halt a slight movement caught my eye. A little ball of dusty looking fluff had fallen off the curb. A closer look revealed a baby duck. I turned to look across the street and there, near the curb, was the mother duck and several of her brood that she had already coaxed across the street.

We watched the mother hurry this final little guy to join his brothers and sisters on the far side of the road. Some of them had safely hopped up onto the sidewalk. A few babies were still trying to negotiate the steep jump onto the curb from the gutter below. I would have liked to jump out and help the determined little creatures, or show them the curb cut only a few feet beyond, but there was no time for that. The officer quickly pulled out and drove on to the next intersection where the mother and her little troop would soon be trying to cross. Already impatient drivers were honking behind us. We had to move along. I worried about the little group all afternoon. When we passed through the intersection at the close of the day, there was no hint that the mallard family had ever been there. We hoped they had safely reached the riverbank in the distance.



## **LOSING IT?**

*Jim Schaye*

I guess I'm just not up to snuff  
Radio for years was quite enough.  
Then I advanced to basic T.V.  
Which I found most satisfactory.  
But my children said,  
    "What Dad, no cable?"  
So I demurring as much I was able  
Suddenly instead of seven known stations  
That I could get with no hesitation  
Now I'm faced with ...94  
And possibly a whole lot more.  
Life used to be so simple, I think  
But this new world drives me to drink!  
Choosing channels 5 or 2  
Was something I had learned to do.  
But 41 or even 63  
Is taxing my aging memory!  
Still, that's not all that makes me sad  
Or sometimes makes me steaming mad.  
I've got a computer that laughs at me  
And makes my life a misery.  
I do know how to do e-mail  
But trying research, I'm doomed to fail.  
Attempting "Google," what a charade,  
Or "Yahoo," I thought I had it made.  
But those two challenges I cannot meet  
So I've become adept at pressing "delete."  
And now, approaching my 9<sup>th</sup> decade  
With mental skills that quickly fade,  
I'd like to say to Mr. Dell  
I do not need your type of Hell.  
And since my kids gave me this tool  
They like to think I'm becoming "cool."  
But coping with the electronic age  
I'm hardly ready for this complex stage,  
And what I find they seem to know  
I was much smarter years ago.



## **SENIOR MOMENTS**

*By Miriam Simen*

One night last week, when I couldn't sleep  
A silly thought entered my head  
What if the words I cannot remember  
Fall out of my brain when I'm dead.

They'll spill into my coffin going round and round  
Wherever they find ample space,  
Weaving stories and poems, the kind that I write  
Into intricate patterns of lace.

Words that I've used for the most of my life  
Including all parts of speech  
Go into hiding deep in my brain  
Regrettably out of my reach.

Telephone numbers are what I remember  
All ten of them in a row,  
And sometimes first letters of words come to mind  
But the whole word itself, I don't know.

This memory is shared with my peers  
It comes with our aging I've heard,  
We've learned to laugh when we're suddenly stumped  
If we cannot remember a word.



## **MOON MADNESS**

*By Bernice S. Bennett*

Many moons ago on a sweltering hot summer evening, my sister and I persuaded our boyfriends to drive us to Nahant Beach. This beat sitting in front of an electric fan with a bowl of ice to improvise air conditioning. We are talking pre-World War II here.

There seemed to be a malaise everywhere. It was understandable with friends, neighbors and relatives being inducted into the draft. We all were looking for ways to brighten our days.

On our way to the beach, we stopped at our favorite clam shack and fortified ourselves with the “usual”. Our portable radio played “Glenn Miller’s best” as we found our favorite spot. The enormous “Carolina” moon hung low, almost as though by design. It was a picture postcard of a night.

We found ourselves completely alone. Probably because it was a week night and all our contemporaries were working overtime to make ends meet during the severe depression that held the economy crippled.

Enjoying the cool, ocean breeze, we dispensed with all conversation. The thought of returning to the cold water flats, that housed so many, was not a priority. Nevertheless, we were enjoying ourselves and in our exhausted state – the inevitable happened. We all fell asleep!

The squawking of the radio startled us awake as the program left the air. HOLY MOLY – A quick glance at our watches showed 1:00 a.m. Our curfew was 12:00!

The car started, but didn’t budge. Our worst nightmare was yet to come. The tide had come in and we were mired in wet sand. No problem! We ran out and began to push. Nothing happened. We pushed harder and then rocked the car back and forth. Still nothing. Why did we not anticipate this? That old saying comes to mind. “Youth is wasted on the young!”

About an hour of this and with no one around to help, we took desperate measures. Our salvation lay in the boardwalk not far from where we were stuck. The four of us yanked and pulled until we disengaged two planks. We wedged them under the two back wheels. The guilt of the crime was outweighed by the thought of the tongue-lashing that was sure to come.

The motor started and the wheels began to spin again. Pushing as hard as we could, the car suddenly shot across the sand and ended back up on the roadside accompanied with our shrieks of joy that sent the seagulls soaring and the fish diving.

Yes, we were read the “riot act” when we arrived back home around 3:00 a.m. All of our parents were concerned, as this was not a way of life back then. Reputations had to be considered. Things happen after 12:00 a.m. that evidently, are not thought of before midnight.

I can tell you this from my experience: A “Carolina Moon” A/K/A “Harvest Moon” is a gorgeous sight to behold – “BUT IT ALSO BRINGS FORTH THE TIDE”!



## **ODE TO THE SEQUESTERED, FESTERED BODY AND SOUL**

*(with apologies to Shakespeare)*

by Rhona Swartz

Anger is the war that is unwinnable  
It spreads its wings wide and  
hurts its young!  
It destroys the innermost soul  
and outweighs the goodness behind the eyes!  
It is an easy, eloquent and self-destructive read!

It slumps the body and curves the back.  
It cannibalizes its blood by raising its pressure.  
It negates all the basic elements of the singing soul!  
Yet, like the lark at break of day to heaven's gates arising  
Peace flies into the beleaguered heart!  
The ceaseless, warring, churning gradually paces itself  
into obscurity!  
The ultimate destroyer of anger, FORGIVENESS sweetly  
arches its path of love into the hardened heart.

## **FUTILITY**

By Joyce Todd

I knocked on a closed door.  
No sound came from within.  
Again I knocked.  
Again – no sound.  
And the louder I knocked, the louder was the silence.  
In despair, I turned away.  
Said a low moan, "You must knock only on open doors."  
Said I, "Then there would be no need to knock."  
"True," came the moan, "and no need to answer."



## **The Skeptic**

By Madeleine Osborn

Now, when I read the story of Creation,  
How God created the sky and land and sea,  
The moon and stars were not yet  
in the heavens.  
"It took six days". However could that be?

When faithful Noah built the ark,  
His menagerie to float,  
Did lamb and lion call a truce  
'Till they were off that boat?

When Jonah's voyage ended  
In the belly of a whale,  
Did he regret with bitterness  
The day he'd learned to sail?

When Adam after surgery did waken  
To find himself confronted with a mate,  
Considered he, his extra rib worth losing,  
Unaware of what would be his fate?

On Sinai, did God really speak to Moses.  
When from Pharaoh's wrath the Israelites  
did flee?

If Adam's great temptation was an apple.  
How did I ever come to be?

I wonder!

## **Sledding**

*By Joyce Weenberg*

I remember jumping out of bed  
And running to get my sled  
My Dad said he'd take me for a ride  
And as far as I know he never lied.  
The snow had fallen in the night  
And the flakes stuck to the ground just right  
Down the big hill I amiably floated  
And I watched my Dad as we'd take the coast.  
When we got home all wet and dripping  
It is cookies and cocoa we were sipping

We'd hang up our snowsuits so they'd dry  
And think of the hills over which we did fly.  
I remember the look on my Dad's face  
Oh, how he loved to give me a good race.  
I can still feel the chill wind on my face  
As I tried to keep up to my Dad's pace.  
I live these moments again and again  
When I pack up my very own children.



## **PROCRASTINATION**

*By Eleanora Goolkasian*

Pick up your pen and start to write.  
No matter what just write, write, write.  
A poem, an outline, a novel, who knows  
What lies inside this feeble brain.  
I'm trying so hard, I'm going insane.

Why not a stroll beside the stream  
Better go quickly lest I scream.  
No! What I need is inspiration.  
I'll play some music, oh blessed elation.

Just thought of something  
Could be the plot!  
Oh, what the heck, I'll give it a shot.  
I'll choose an era from olden times,  
With characters and settings sublime.

Now, I'm all worn out  
Gotta hit the hay.  
Guess I'll write another day.

## **Progress**

*By Madeleine M. Osborn*

They gazed with lust and with them brought  
An ugly, huge machine.  
She lay there, proud and beautiful.  
'Mid splendor of her green.

They bulldozed every bush and tree.  
No leaf stem could be seen.  
They hard topped every inch of earth  
And took away the green.

They brought in bricks. Then buildings tall,  
Soon rose upon the scene.  
They blotted out each ray of sun  
And took away the green.

They celebrate their handiwork;  
An architectural dream,  
While earth bemoans her ravishment;  
The raping of her green.



## **Old Jack ...**

*by Richard V. McCann,*

*Edited by Phyllis (McCann) Hollinshead*



One-eyed Jack, as we often referred to him – he had lost an eye chopping wood many years previously – was a member of the crew of the coastal passenger liner the S. S. Portland, which steamed back and forth, Portland to Boston. Jack was one of the stokers for the ship's coal-fired engines.

One summer afternoon, as the ship was about to embark on its customary journey “down” the coast to Portland from its berth in Boston Harbor, Captain Bradford was informed that the squally weather was about to become much worse and that it would be unwise to leave the port. But he had a full complement of passengers and was loathe to disappoint them at the last moment – or to lose the sizable income from that trip. So he gave the order to sail.

By the time the steamship was off Cape Anne, near Gloucester, the squally weather had developed into an Atlantic hurricane. Wild winds, fifty-foot waves, and sheets of rain and hail battered the Portland and she eventually capsized. All the passengers and crew-members were drowned. Except Jack! As sailing time was approaching, Jack had been busy preparing for several consecutive hours of shoveling coal, by ingesting several consecutive swigs of rum, and had become too tipsy to get to the dock in time for the Portland's departure. As soon as he heard what had happened to the S.S. Portland and his shipmates, it dawned on him that Rum had miraculously saved his life. He remained devoted to Lady Rum for the rest of his days.

Jack was unemployed for several months. He had several drinking companions during the layovers at the Portland end of the coastal runs, and one afternoon one of them lent him a small, somewhat ramshackle but seaworthy rowboat and a few lobster traps, showed him the techniques, and set him to lobstering.

Jack moved into a little shack attached to the rear of the barn of the Higgins Inn at Higgins Beach, at proprietor Ed Higgins invitation, and began to earn his living from beneath the ocean instead of from its surface. Getting and selling lobsters requires official permission. After Jack had located a permanent mooring in the Spurwink for his boat, arranged for a holding bin for his daily catch, and otherwise showed that he was serious about his new enterprise, the Town Board of Selectmen issued him a license.

We often saw Jack coming up the back road from the river to his shack or along the beach or stopping at cottages. He always wore a heavy, totally battered felt hat, his one eye looking out from under the floppy brim. And often he wore rubber boots:

according to the tide, he sometimes had to wade out to his mooring. He always carried a big gunny-sack of burlap for the lobsters he was bringing in on order or hoping to sell at cottages here and there.

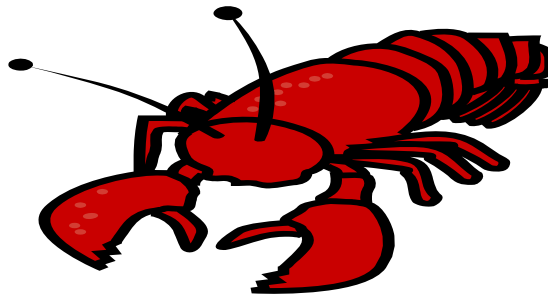
After supper one day Mom and Dad, Sister Phyllis and I were sitting on the porch enjoying watching the beautiful strong surf and the changing colors in the early evening sky when Jack came along. My Father invited him to join us. The purpose of Jack's visit was not social. He was hoping that my father, a lawyer, could help him solve a critical problem: The Board of Selectmen had just revoked his lobstering license. He asked Dad if he could convince them to restore it to him.

Every shell fish warden and every licensed lobsterman has a metal measuring rod to check that the body shell of the lobster from head to beginning of tail is no shorter than five inches. An experienced lobsterman could, of course, see at a glance if the body shell was too short, thus illegal. If it was short, he was supposed to toss the critter back into the ocean to mature. Jack had been taking short lobsters, frequently, and had received several warnings from the shellfish warden. Finally, after considerable patience by the officials – he lost his license.

Before he left, Jack assured my father, now his attorney pro -bono, that he would be more careful in the future and would not break the law by taking any more short lobsters.

The next day my father went personally to the Scarborough Selectmen's Office. He gave them One-Eyed Jack's background, pointing out that without lobstering as a source of income, Jack would probably have to be placed on town welfare. He also said that Jack's handicap of only one eye sometimes made it difficult for him to judge the measuring rod. His final point on Jack's behalf, and to which he gave special emphasis: Jack had given his word of honor that never again would he take a short lobster out of the Atlantic Ocean. The Selectmen immediately restored Jack's license.

The next morning when we opened the front door of the cottage, there on the porch was a splendid token of appreciation and gratitude to Dad and the family from Jack – a large basket chock full of lobsters, glistening in the early morning sunlight. And every one of them was short.



# **THE WISDOM OF THE SEA**

*By Madeleine Osborn*

One warm Sunday afternoon, as I sat gazing out over Gloucester Harbor on a bench near the statue of a fisherman, an old sea captain with his grandson sat down on a bench nearby. I couldn't help but overhear their conversation.

The boy turned to his grandfather and earnestly asked, "Grandpa, what do I have to learn before I become a man?" After musing for a few moments, the old man replied:

"My son, first you must check your compass, chart your course, and then maintain it. When a storm arises, reef your sails, batten down your hatches, and head for the nearest port. Any port will do where you can weather the storm. When the tide's a-runnin', it's time to ship out. Don't let yourself get caught in the undertow!

When you are clear, find out which way the wind's a-blowin', let the sheets out, trim your sails, and fly with the wind in your riggin'! When you see a squall approachin' watch your course or you may end up on the rocks.

If you hit a reef and your ship is scuttled, cut away the mast so you will have something to hang on to until the storm dies down and the sea is calm again.

Get yourself another ship. When you do, swab down the decks from stem to stern, so you'll start fresh. Find yourself a mate, but be sure you watch the cut of his jib. If he blows like a whale, don't trust him. Don't give him too much leeway either. You are the captain and must make the decisions.

Now, with your decks in shipshape condition, you will be ready to cast off and resume your voyage.

The boy looked up and in a solemn voice answered, "I will, Grandpa, I want to be a man like you."

The old man put his arm around the boy's shoulders and I heard him say, "If you follow this advice my son, you won't flounder in the water but will live to be a happy man. You'll always stay on an even keel."

They arose and slowly walked away, the old man, leaning on his cane, and the boy skipping along beside him.

*I watched with wonder for I too marveled at the wisdom of the sea.*



## **Definitions of words & expressions:**

*Reef-* Take tucks in sails, make smaller.

*Batten down-* Close the covers, seal tightly.

*Sheets-* A rope that regulates the angle at which a sail is set to catch the wind.

*Trim the sails-* Pull the sheets of the sails until the sail stops flapping.

*Squall-* A sudden violent gust of wind, often with rain or snow.

*Scuttle-* To cut a hole in bottom or side of a boat causing it to sink.

*Swab-* To clean the deck with a mop.

*Cut of his jib-* His personality, how he strikes a person.

*Leeway-* Room to do his own thing.

*Flounder-* Lose the ability to stay afloat, thrashing about.

*Even keel-* No tipping or capsizing.

## **SUNDAY DINNER AT WILLISTON ROAD**

Joan Chaisson



When we were growing up, we always had Sunday dinner in the early afternoon, after everyone got home from church. When there was no Sunday school we kids tagged along with Mom to the 10:30 Mass and Dad would go to the 11:30. Before we set out for church, Mom and Dad would start preparing the dinner. Dad would truss the chickens or set the roast beef into the roasting pan and pop it into the oven. He and Mom would peel the potatoes and other vegetables, cut them up into the pots, and set them on the stove, ready to cook when it was time.

Sometimes, when Gerry and I were walking home from church with Mom, and we started the last steep climb between Fern Street and Maple Road, Mom would have Gerry and me fall behind her and push her ample backside, to help her up the hill.

By the time Dad arrived home from church the meat would be done. While he was at Mass, Mom had cooked and drained the veggies, set the table, and nearly completed the meal. If there was a few minutes to spare while we waited for latecomers, Dad might scoop the pot of fluffy mashed potatoes into a large serving bowl and sculpt it with a serving spoon into a fort, complete with ramparts and maybe a couple of Gerry's tin soldiers standing ready to fire. He also made castles with towers and a moat, made by dragging the spoon handle around the edge and placing a paper flag on top.

After the meal, the older kids usually wandered off to the movies, sports activities, or even to the library to study. Others would settle in the kitchen or the living room with the Sunday paper. In good weather, some of us would go for a walk, to the ducks or over to the aqueduct, always accompanied of course by Mitzi. On Summer Sundays, sometimes Dad would change into his boating clothes, and take some of us canoeing. Long before I was born, on summer Sundays, Dad and the kids would make a mixer full of ice cream while sitting on the back steps and taking turns cranking. Then he would set it to ripen while they ate dinner. By the time I came along, Dad would stop into Keyes Drugstore after Mass and buy a couple of quarts of their hand packed ice cream. He hurried home with it, and set it on the big cake of ice in the top of the icebox, where it stayed mostly frozen until dinner was done.

I think it was on Thanksgiving of 1939 or 1940 that the West Newton Theater opened. The older kids all went off after dinner for its Grand Opening. I was too small to walk all the way to West Newton, so I remained with Mom and Dad and fed the birds and the squirrels. On December 7, 1941, the older kids all burst in the front door and announced breathlessly that theater manager had halted the film to announce that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. The big console radio in the living room was quickly turned on and we gathered round to listen to a newscaster describe what had happened. Then President Roosevelt came on and spoke to us. I didn't understand all of what was going on, but I could see that Mom and Dad immediately began to worry about Bud, who was in Wildwood New Jersey, training to be a dive-bomber pilot. Some of our aunts and uncles called to speak with them about it.

We had our own little "day of infamy" at Williston Road. On this particular Sunday, we followed the regular routine. The gravy was bubbling in the roasting pan on the stove, Dad had carved the leg of lamb and arranged the meat on grandmother McCarty's thistle platter. It sat on the pantry counter, ready to serve. As we were about to sit down, Aunt Nellie and her sister Margaret arrived unexpectedly at the front door. Mom invited them in, took their wraps and hung them on the coat tree in the front hall. She told them that dinner was all ready, and invited them to join us.

"Oh no," said Nellie, "We're just stopping by for a minute to say hello."

But stay they did. As they all chitchatted in the living room, we kids became and more restless. I think we might have gone outside to admire our reflection in the Chevrolet dressed in our "Sunday best". The visit

dragged on and on. At some point, one of us, perhaps Bud, sauntered out to the kitchen, noted the plate of meat on the counter, and snatched a piece of lamb. Catching on, someone else took a stroll to “pinch” a piece of meat off the platter. Soon another and another took the circuitous route from living room to front hall, to kitchen, to the pantry, pausing for a piece of lamb, and continuing through the dining room and back to the living room. As the guests chatted, the children chewed.

At last Nellie and Margaret rose and retrieved their coats from the hall, again politely declining to join us for Sunday dinner. Mom and Dad saw them out the door, and immediately hustled back to the kitchen to reheat our meal. Mom put the vegetables into bowls and poured the gravy into the gravy boat. We children scrambled into our seats in the dining room. Dad started to reach for the platter. But what was this? The entire plate of meat had disappeared. As we had circled round and round, we had eaten the whole leg of lamb, nibble by nibble, except for a couple of bits of fat that sat forlornly in a small puddle of drippings.

... and that was Sunday at Williston Road.



## **PAIN AND LOVE**

*By Arthur Talis*

This is a story of overcoming an illness.

She emigrated from Lesbos Island, Greece to the United States in 1924. She married John Talis in 1925 and we six children were born.

At night when we were sleeping, Rodoklea (Mama) would awaken. Bent over in pain she would moan, muffled to spare us her grief. We cried inside and prayed to God that her pain would go away. It seemed to me that the more acute and uncomfortable she got, the closer she was to God. She would pray all of the time and close by blessing herself in the Greek Orthodox manner.

At our bath time, during our shampoo, she would say in Greek “Ella Xriste kai Panaia: (Come Christ and Holy Mother) and they did come, but not just then, later when they were needed. After drawing water from the tap she poured a cup of water on our soapy heads saying again in Greek (she knew no English) “Ena ya tou Theiou” (One for God) and again the water “Enna ya tou Xristo (One for Christ) and “Enna ya tou lou Phevma” (One for the Holy Spirit). Then it was accomplished” A baptism by a mother for her child. This was done when the pain subsided, when she was feeling better.

I never heard my father pray. I know he hoped and planned and worked and loved hard, not soft. It was different from my mother’s love, which was gentle and patient and reaching, through the worst. They loved us all, five sons and a daughter. We became a doctor, a tax expert, a shoe worker, a chemist, an entrepreneur and a real estate agent.

Her suffering didn’t make sense to me. This pain came at all hours of the day, but mostly at night. She went to doctors repeatedly. She took medications, again and again. The pain would persist. The pills, powders and other medications did her no good. Some doctors diagnosed her as having psychosomatic pain. Others took out her appendix and her gallbladder and found they were healthy organs. No one could find the source of her pain. She suffered quietly and lived a life, giving love to each one of us; *the more pain, the more love... it was that way.*

At long last, Dr. Sweet (the perfect name!), a specialist in stomach ailments discovered that the Vega nerve, above the stomach, sometimes discharges certain acid-like substances causing discomfort, and pain,. He learned that by a certain incision and closure of the nerve he could prevent these symptoms. He operated on our mother. The pain was gone... the love remained. We thanked God for the wondrous cure.



## '8540'

by Bernice S. Bennett

Forty-five years is a “giant of a slice of life”. You find yourself wandering back through the tunnel of experiences and wonder if you would travel that route again. The year that I graduated High School opened my life to a new beginning. For me, it was not an easy accomplishment. You see, I never liked school! I might even go so far as to say I hated it with all my adolescent years. I was convinced it was a conspiracy to thwart my freedom and I blamed the government, school authorities and my parents for the punishment inflicted on me. As an interesting sidelight, in direct contradiction to that abomination, I find myself chasing “continuing education courses” from one end of the city to the next, trying to make up for my youthful lack of true values.

For many reasons my “45<sup>th</sup>” High School Reunion was a most exciting event and I was looking forward to it. I dressed carefully, but simply, for I knew that clothes were a reflection of the body and spirit. They should never be in control!

I danced around with a diet for two weeks – but after one step forward and two steps back – I gave up! My intentions were honorable – I can assure you!

“Do I look sixteen?”, I coyly asked my husband.

“No! More like seventeen!” That was the flip answer I could have expected.

“As old as that?” I played the game and begged the question.

Alas, it was a time to be on my own. He could not participate – for this was my time and only mine! His achievements spoke for themselves, more often than not. I must not share this with anyone, not even the children or grandchildren.

After a careful selection of what a “Reunion Woman” wears, I left the house and slid behind the wheel of my car in anticipation of seeing my former classmates. I drove out to the highway. The day was warm, bordering on the humid side (did I remember to bring my fan?) Laughing and avoiding the stares of the other drivers on the road, I envisioned two-hundred odd women fanning themselves in rhythmic unison. Why not? Hadn’t we earned the right?

Forty minutes went by like forty hours and I approached the “castle-like” entrance to the hotel. Early? Yes, but so were others who gathered in little “knots” here and there. In the lobby, bubbles of laughter floated upwards and heads were straining to catch sight of all newcomers. Suddenly, I was grabbed by the arm and pulled toward the reception desk.. Rita, all smiles, asked me if I remembered her. Indeed I did, but was shocked by the presence of her husband sitting benignly on the sidelines. Sometime ago, I had heard that he had passed, erroneous rumor that it was. I shook his hand and kissed him with warmth, grateful that he really was here... and not there.

Squeals of joy, some high, sharp and piercing; all trailing off into smothered hugs and kisses as forty-five years melted joyous “Nanas and Grandmas”, into seventeen-year old teenagers. We were young – in the eyes of our contemporaries. My mind wandered back to “My” special group. We *were* “something else” for we were reared on a stiff-backed genteel course that made us the survivors we are!

Growing up in the “Great Depression” of the thirties, we didn’t know we were poor because no one had told us! Our work was hard! We shared everything! It was not uncommon for everyone to pitch in for an ailing friend. We might knit some not so professional-looking scarf or maybe even an afghan or two. No matter, we would all try to stimulate a quick recovery. That and Mama’s chicken soup often did the trick!



My reverie over, I came back to '85 and took a deep breath, or was it a sigh? Soon, the tables beckoned us and we quickly joined each other, while the music of the "forties" permeated the air. With heads bowed, our hearts filled with regret and sorrow in tribute to the missing ones who had left us forever, and we knew a lessening of joy.

Posing happily with our hands clasped around each other, the taller ones in back (just like our high school picture) we repeated the effort. The photographer assured us he would make us come out looking like Radio City Rockettes. We knew that, when all was said and done, the glossies would find their way into the backs of our bureau drawers. At this point, we were not about to "flaunt our flaws".

The one responsible for putting this package together stood at the podium, head turning from side to side to include one and all in her lovely smile. Her charming self addressed us and held our attention.

"Ladies – welcome! You don't know how happy I am to see all of you at this reunion at last. Do you happen to know what the lottery number was last night? Well, I'll tell you! It was "8540"! Think about it for a minute! '85 is the year today and '40 the year we graduated. Do you believe in coincidence, or can we call it precognition?"

We examined each other's faces for a response and nodded our heads in confirmation. This brought something very important to mind. I shall tell them of my interest in "Holistic Science" and parapsychology. The fact that I have been dabbling with some so-called far-out qualities, should spark an interesting conversation, indeed. Maybe, they will pull some surprises "out of their hats!"

Delia walked by waving her hand in greeting. I grabbed it and drew her to our table. "Delia, do you remember the night you had a house party for about ten couples?" I asked. "Was it someone's birthday – Halloween, or something? I can't remember that part of it. What I couldn't forget was, the boy – currently the "man of the hour" in my life, who had brought me home early. He was tired, he pleaded, and had to get up early for work. But he went right back to the party to see you. You were the "Belle of the Ball" as far as he was concerned. I never forgot, elephant that I am! I really didn't love him, but he was the one that got away and I was keeping score! Do you remember now, Delia?" She shrugged her shoulders and brushed aside what was paramount to my mental health in those early, laughable years.

We chatted on – the boyfriend long forgotten and discarded. Anxious to join a conversation, most of the women left their tables and began to form little clusters. A humming of chatter began again. I felt a complete sense of rapport with all. Oh, how starved I have been for the understanding that this age group can offer. The milling around and buzzing continued until finally, the room went quiet and we found our tables again – to be served our delicious meal. Was it that good? I guess so! Who knows? Our hearts were brimming over with love and nostalgia, as our glances from one to the other jogged our memories.

We dwelt on what "might have been", had the year been 1980 rather than 1940. Would we have exchanged our life styles for that of young women today? Would we go "back in time", to the repressed '40's women's roles where we were the nurturers and keepers of all men's souls?

The air became heavy with heated debate and we went at it – all of us. The issue was far too important to fade out. Yes's... no's... maybes... were heard in all directions. Eleanor Roosevelt, Betty Friedan. Jane Fonda, Gloria Steinem became out invited guests. And most important of all to me, my mystical friend, Shirley MacLaine! Now there is a personage.

Did we make points? A few of us did – moving ahead like a many-footed Chinese Dragon, slowing down, speeding up, rearing our ugly head of dissension – the dragon snorted its final shot of smoke until we quieted down! We talked on and revealed more! There were second marriages sprinkled around and if memory has not forsaken me – even a third (how exciting and voyeuristic!).

We touched on every likely middle-aged topic, including vacations (some very familiar to most), others, exotic enough to encourage exploration by the rest of us. We spent much time explaining our pseudo-careers and part-time positions and we agreed almost unanimously, that the rewards we gained were not monetary, but we did find a deep sense of accomplishment outside our “bed and board” routine!

It was a hard road we had taken and very rocky at times. I sat back and listened carefully to all of these revelations. Some had such heart-rending tales to relate. There were a few “horror stories” traded also! Life was good! Life was bad! All the time this was going on, the same words kept bouncing around my brain. Over and over, it repeated itself until I finally had to blurt it out!

“Don’t you realize, all of you, that we are all born broken – but during our lifetime – we mend – with GOD as our glue.” Thank you – Eugene O’Neill for that GEM! Philosophy is a gift that seems to attach itself like barnacles as we get older and I certainly have my share.

Again, my eyes swept the room and a sea of faces looked back at me. I saw not a few grey-haired, smartly coiffed heads topping matronly bodies. Others went unrecognized, because of the passage of time. Suddenly the music changed its tune.

A strange aura brightened up the room and happy, girlish laughter floated across a gymnasium floor; balloons and crepe paper in school colors hung low as Harry James’ music penetrated the air. On and on, we jitterbugged and fox-trotted! We were back in the arms of our high school beaus and being watched by chaperones strategically placed-to prevent too much contact. In spite of these precautions– many romances blossomed – and pushed into early marriages, for there was no “trial period!”

I couldn’t help but think, we are changing just the same, but that this could happen at  $\frac{3}{4}$  time amazes me. We ARE emerging from our insulation and cocoons! Are you HEARING me – “women-libbers” everywhere?

Reluctantly, I left the reunion with a sense of nostalgia and a touch of loneliness for things left behind. But I came away, as well, fired-up with exhilaration with the realization of better things to come. A foundation of camaraderie had been cemented; a timeless and ageless gift that no world-turning events can disrupt or disintegrate!

